

‘A world where nothing is solved’: Investigating the Anthropocene in *True Detective*

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Abstract

In the HBO series *True Detective* (2014–present), the material world is no mere backdrop. It is not a neutral geography against which the theatre of human drama takes place, nor does it simply take the form of a psychological landscape, understood as an expression of the interior terrain of the show’s protagonists. This particular crime drama does not rely on the stabilizing dualism of exterior/interior, nor does it concern itself with an interaction between these apparently separate realms. Instead, *True Detective* deals with the consequences of living as part of a world in which such dualisms – and the humanist assumptions upon which they are based – are subject to mass extinction, a world in which a long-held belief in the separability of culture and nature, of free will and determinism, of the organic and the technological, is no longer tenable. Here, far from peripheral to practices of detection and investigation, the material world is an active agent inseparably entangled in such practices. In this article I contend that *True Detective* maps present trauma concerning a geohistorical period scientists have designated the Anthropocene, and, in doing so, radically exploits a crisis in the anthropocentric conventions of the genre.

Keywords

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weird

In the HBO series *True Detective* (2014–present), the material world is no mere backdrop. It is not a neutral geography against which the theatre of human drama takes place, nor does it simply take the form of a psychological landscape, understood as an expression of the interior terrain of the show’s protagonists. This particular crime drama does not rely on the stabilizing dualism of exterior/interior, nor does it concern itself with an interaction between these apparently separate realms. Instead, *True Detective* deals with the consequences of living as part of a world in which such dualisms – and the humanist assumptions upon which they are based – are subject to mass extinction, a world in which a long-held belief in the separability of culture and nature, of free will and determinism, of the organic and the technological, is no longer tenable. Here, far from peripheral to practices of detection and investigation, the material world is an active agent inseparably entangled in such practices. In this article I will contend that *True Detective* radically exploits a crisis in the anthropocentric conventions of the genre in the context of what Timothy Morton (2013: 9) calls the ‘specific ecological trauma’ of the present. This trauma, born of a geo-historical period geologists and climate scientists have designated the Anthropocene (Crutzen 2002), concerns, on one level, the catastrophic planetary implications of human culture and, in particular, technologically mediated human culture. And yet the concept of the Anthropocene only names the age of the human at the point at which categorical and consensual certainties about human subjectivity are

thoroughly destabilized and decentred. This is, then, a catastrophe at once ecological and metaphysical, a crisis of a world ‘after’ the human. Through an examination of the aesthetics of *True Detective*, I will argue that the series diagnoses a certain twenty-first century despair in which our trauma is repeatedly multiplied by the limited power of our intellectual resources, our modes of detection. The series does, though, allude to an ecological mode of detection, one that I will argue is more suited to the circumstances of the present. It is on this basis that I also seek to explore how studies in popular television might respond to the demands of a ‘geo-centred turn’ in critical theory (Braidotti 2013: 83), and what has been characterized as ‘a changed climate of thought’ (Shaviro 2014: 4).

Ecological detection

At the time of writing this article, *True Detective* consists of two anthology seasons, each comprising eight episodes.¹ In the first season, set in the petrochemical landscape of Louisiana, we follow the efforts of two homicide detectives as they investigate a series of ritualistic killings over a period of seventeen years. Their investigation uncovers the complex collusion between a religious institution, a corrupt police force, and a shadowy cult. In the second season, set in the sprawling Los Angeles region of California, we follow the efforts of three detectives from different law enforcement departments, along with a gangster-cum-detective, as they come together to investigate the murder of a crooked government official. In this instance, the investigation exposes entangled links between infrastructural investment, land contamination, a ‘high-end’ prostitution ring, a spiritual commune, and an out of control police force. Although quite different in their structure and approach, each season shares an affective tone of anxiety, dislocation, and radical uncertainty. This is

epitomized, in season 1, by homicide detective Rustin Cohle's memorable disavowal of his own powers: 'I don't wanna know anymore – this is a world where nothing is solved' (1:5).² Each season deals with paralysed resignation, with bewildered defeat, with detectives seemingly overwhelmed by their investigations. Indeed, these are detectives sensitive to the fact that the spaces and times traversed by their investigations – boggy wetlands and industrial sprawl – elude the precepts and scope of the genre. These investigations encounter something that cannot be reduced to familiar serial killer motifs, that cannot be encompassed by the traditions of seedy noir. The detectives flounder, we flounder with them.

Here I am interested in the ways that *True Detective* expresses a sensibility specific to the Anthropocene era, which is to say that I believe the series can help to 'provide an account of *what it feels like* to live in the early twenty-first century' (Shaviro 2010: 2). This is to insist, with Steven Shaviro (2010: 6), that television dramas, and indeed all media, do not simply represent but actively perform 'the social relations, flows, and feelings that they are ostensibly "about"'. Today we are experiencing the emergence of a new kind of sensibility, distinct from the high humanism that still largely dominates western culture (Braidotti 2013: 13–16). One word to describe this sensibility is 'Weird', used here to evoke a resurgent tendency in twenty-first century literature. Weird fiction concerns a traumatic expulsion from the known, a collapse of the natural, and an exposure to cosmic forces that cannot be recuperated by systems of meaning. For the novelist China Miéville (2009: 510), the Weird is something deeply material, an encounter with 'the strangeness of the physical world itself'. He describes this in terms of the sublime. In its Romantic incarnation, Miéville suggests, the sublime is the sense of wonder and terror triggered by a spectacle like the great mountains of the Alps. This is, though, an experience that

remains separated off from the everyday by a threshold of magnitude and enormity – we only come to be affected by sublime power through artistic endeavour. The Weird conveys a sense of how this threshold might be penetrated, it ‘allows swillage of that awe and horror from “beyond” back into the everyday’, into inexplicable aesthetic experiences that function as ‘a radicalized sublime backwash’ (Miéville 2009: 511).

The weirdness of the Anthropocene is experienced at a historical moment in which ‘[t]he background ceases to be a background’ (Morton 2013: 102), in which the consequences of anthropogenic climate change provoke a newly intimate perception of ecological relations, relations ordinarily consigned to an extraneous realm against which the real business of existence occurs. In a weird world our relations with nonhuman objects, processes and systems – in even the most banal and quotidian of circumstances – become increasingly disconcerting. In the Anthropocene we grapple with the idea that the planet Earth will bear a permanent geological mark produced by human ‘terraforming’ (Morton 2013: 4). Such marks include the global distribution of carbon deposits, and the chemical and radioactive alteration to the surface of the Earth. The sublime backwash of the Anthropocene does not, though, grant humans the significance of a supposed encounter with the infinite. The consequences of industrial capitalism instead have ‘very large finitude’ which humiliates intellectual hubris (Morton 2013: 60). It is the material specificity of the Anthropocene that eludes us.³ Moreover, we only arrive at this concept when the future it describes is already here, that is to say, when its consequences have already established a future in which it is unlikely that humans will survive to discern such geological marks. In *True Detective*, the hippie father of detective Ani Bezzerides describes this as ‘the final age of man’ (2:1) – ours is a world built on technological arrogance now subject to a state of collapse, a world in which the human is forced to experience the demise of its own

Promethean powers. Later in the same episode detective Ray Velcoro laments that he ‘used to want to be an astronaut, but astronauts don’t even go to the moon any more’ (2:1). We used to harness technology as a means to overcome humanity’s earthly limitations, now we use it to model threats to our future survival, and – with a rising sense of panic – hope it might render our ecological relations knowable (Edwards 2010).

I will return to the question of the Anthropocene shortly, but first I want to dwell upon Rustin Cohle’s contention that long established powers of human knowledge increasingly frustrate rather than solve. After all, the detective and crime genres are traditionally concerned with questions of epistemology – with the struggle to understand the world and, ultimately, to solve it. In Brian McHale’s well-known account, the detective story is the preeminent example of an epistemological mode that dominates modernist fiction. Foregrounded in such fiction is the question of how the reality of a world might be interpreted, of how various forms of evidence might render this world knowable with some degree of certainty (McHale 1987: 9). The detective is driven by the need to know, by the need to observe, measure and identify. Here the object of epistemological enquiry is a crime – a set of loose ends that, during the course of an investigation, may take on more conspiratorial or malevolent forms, but once subject to the detective’s determination to totalize, will in the end be tied up (McHale 1987: 22). Detection projects onto chaos the ordering powers of human reason. Accordingly, even though the great Sherlock Holmes describes his powers of detection in terms of intuition, these powers are founded on the well-honed application of ‘special knowledge’ and employed in keeping with the ‘rules of deduction’ (Doyle 2011: 22). For Holmes, deduction is a positivist science based on careful and continuous observation. It is only necessary to review his ‘train of

reasoning' (Doyle 2011: 23) when explicating the detail to Watson and Lestrade, his slow-witted associates.

Of course, experts on the genre emphasize that it has never been homogeneous, and that it is the product of different traditions, traditions that not only include a mode of ratiocination familiar to detective stories of the nineteenth century, but also include a hardboiled alternative, associated with twentieth century American pulp, wherein the romance of intellectual puzzles is supplanted by the grim actuality of crime itself (Turnbull 2014: 25–27). One might be forgiven for assuming *True Detective* simply updates this formula: 'Do you wonder ever if you're a bad man?' detective Martin Hart asks his partner, Cohle. 'The world needs bad men', Cohle replies, spelling out their status as antiheroes, 'We keep the other bad men from the door' (1:3). Even the title 'True Detective' is taken from the archetypal true crime magazine credited with spawning a whole genre of exploitation publishing.⁴ However, in *True Detective*, formulaic characters, dialogue and plot points only show up a crisis in the formula itself, they reveal the now unpersuasive posturing that underlies a certain mode of detection, they are fodder for something weirder.

In its hardboiled mode, the process of detection has the potential to unfold according to what Fredric Jameson (1991: 54) has called '[a]n aesthetic of cognitive mapping', whereby the detective seeks to realize 'some new heightened sense of [...] place' within the increasingly abstract 'world space' of global capital. This world space is produced by an ever more networked, systematized form of power, which utilizes new technologies of transportation and communication to mediate a multiplicity of linkages and relations. The fragmentation and atomization of urban social experience is, for Jameson, a consequence of living according to such relations, one that necessitates a different mode of detection. Raymond Chandler's Philip

Marlowe, for example, seeks to map links between mean streets and the moneyed rich, a rough urban experience that, on one level, serves the detective's knowledge – the act of detection provides the means 'to see, to know, the society as a whole' (Jameson 1970: 629). In this sense, cynical antiheroes are ciphers for limitless epistemological enquiry. Detection maps a world that is cognizable, rendered open to the reason of a knowing subject. But as Jameson emphasizes, this mode of detection also anticipates epistemological limits and uncertainties symptomatic of a postmodern capitalist system. Crimes may be solved but the detective's desire to submit the world to totalizing knowledge cannot compete with the totality of capital itself. The crimes merely hint at something else, a truth from which the detective remains spatially alienated. This loss of a privileged Holmesian perspective means that the detective is always in some way implicated, always part of the case, reduced to an epistemological fumbling in the dark that is the very definition of *noir*. As Casey Shoop (2011: 231) contends, it is a loss that induces a state of 'confusion, not to say collapse, from outside into inside, from the epistemological certainty of the map to the ontological uncertainty of the street'.

In McHale's account this collapse signals a broader transformation characterized by a shift away from the modernist tendency to problematize knowing, and a turn instead towards postmodern questions of being. For McHale, postmodern fiction is a consequence of the crisis in moral humanism upon which any faith in rational agency had previously depended. Although Chandler's detective stories anticipate and allude to aspects of this shift, McHale contends that it is in science fiction that we encounter 'the ontological genre *par excellence*' (McHale 1987: 16). This postmodern form of science fiction concerns itself with issues of subjectivity and representation rather than the exploration of outer space. The unreliable reality of this

world is not open to interpretation; the world is instead a simulacrum subject to disturbing fissures and strange events. This is a world divided, dualistic, a world of material processes and things that – for humans, at least – does not exist outside of its cognitive or perceptual rendering. It is, then, a reflexive mode of science fiction that deals with this apparently unresolvable gulf between the knower and the known. Yet in *True Detective*, even this is subject to collapse, to a weirder kind of collapse, more intense, more traumatic. The Anthropocene era seems to ‘force something on us’, to ‘unground the human by forcing it back onto the ground’, namely the Earth (Morton 2013: 15, 18). Here, detection is a material and ecological practice. This ecological mode of detection does not reflect on the reality of the world from an external position of epistemological certainty, nor does the crisis that provokes this mode preserve the belief that real access to the material world is always denied. Instead, it begins from a situation of entanglement wherein the supposed distance between ontology and epistemology, between knowing and being, has itself collapsed. In Karen Barad’s terms, ecological detection expresses the fact that ‘knowing, thinking, measuring, theorizing, and observing are material practices of intra-acting within and as part of the world’ (2007: 90).

It is therefore worth noting that, in contemporary television drama, science fiction continues to be seen as the preeminent genre through which it is possible to explore transformations to the ontological framework that constitutes the human. The editors of the recently published *Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television* (Hauskeller et al. 2015), argue that the limited concept of the human, based as it is on agency and selfhood, spectacularly disintegrates under the pressure of various technological developments. As they suggest, humankind accelerates beyond its apparent limitations – bodily and cognitive – through the construction of

increasingly intense relations with all manner of technological objects and processes. Here, humanist categories in place since the Enlightenment, based on a rigid separation between the natural and the artificial, the organic and the machinic, are rendered useless. Importantly, this does not occur because technology is naïvely conceived as a deterministic force, but is based on a renewed understanding that ‘we are, deep down, inseparable from our technologies’ (Hauskeller et al. 2015: 2–3). The human coexists and coevolves with the nonhuman, and this has *always* been the case. And yet, much of the focus on how such ideas are explored in science fiction remains teleological in that it is fixed on the issue of human progress, on future capacities and potentials ‘beyond the human’ (Grusin 2015: ix).⁵

In so directly expressing the weird sensibility of the Anthropocene, *True Detective* demonstrates how television drama might perform the crisis of humanism in a different way. Specifically, the ecological mode of detection performatively maps the affective conditions of the Anthropocene. It functions according to what Shaviro – in a revision of Jameson’s concept – has termed ‘an aesthetic of affective mapping’, wherein mapping is a process inseparably entangled with the spaces and times under investigation (2010: 6). It is, then, a mode of detection that does not simply recognize or reveal a preexisting world, in which relations are constituted on an anthropocentric basis, but encounters and produces an end to this world entirely. In *True Detective*, this occurs through an encounter with a different kind of technological acceleration, and exposure to a different temporality. On one level, the concept of the Anthropocene offers a geo-material development of Jameson’s contention that the history of technological capitalism is a history of increasing abstraction. The Anthropocene describes an epoch in which existing ecological volatility has been subject to anthropogenic acceleration, giving rise to ever more abstract social spaces

linked together by the material flows of capitalism. This acceleration was triggered by developments surrounding the steam engine and the subsequent expansion of the carbon industries (Morton 2013: 4–5).⁶ The planetary and perhaps even cosmic consequences of this acceleration – the metamorphosis of capital into a fully fledged geo-historical era – not only punctures the hubris by which humanity has come to be synonymous with progress, but eludes representational forms of knowledge altogether. As Jameson (1991: 53) makes clear, this does not mean the world is ‘unknowable’, but that it is necessary to practice a different nonrepresentational mode of knowledge. Here I conceive this as an entangled aesthetic practice of knowing and being, an ecological detection that, in Barad’s terms, involves a mutually constitutive ‘intra-action’ with the world ‘as part of the world in its dynamic material configuring, its ongoing articulation’ (2007: 379). Crucially, ecological detection does not provide the kind of orientation that would render the world newly solvable, indeed it produces an encounter with a wholly different kind of ‘world’.

This is an encounter with the other temporality of the Anthropocene: a deep time, a planetary time of billions of years that repudiates our tendency to think history as *human* history. Although various scientists have, for the past two centuries, considered the possibility that the Earth was far older than conventionally thought, it is only comparatively recently that the Earth’s geochronology has become known with any certainty (Urey 2015: 119–21; Zielinski 2006: 4–6). Deep geological time is utterly alien to us, our understanding of it is not constituted on the basis of totalizing knowledge but in a confrontation with affective flows and forces which ‘swamp us, and continually carry us away from ourselves, beyond ourselves’ (Shaviri 2010: 4).⁷ The Anthropocene is an affective event, one that provokes a horrified realization that

the world is inscribed with a past that is not our own, a weird awareness that this is not a 'world-for-us' (Thacker 2011: 4) and never has been.

In *True Detective*, this weird affect is rendered in different ways, variously explicit and implicit. References, in Season 1, to the 'Yellow King' and 'Carcosa' draw directly on the proto-Weird fiction of Robert W. Chambers (1895), while whole sections of dialogue are appropriated from the work of contemporary Weird writer Thomas Ligotti (2010).⁸ The weirdness of Season 2 is less overt, it is expressed in the actions of an odd group of desultory, traumatized characters, characters whose inarticulate and sometimes amusingly failed attempts at profundity epitomize how the necessity for 'radical humility' (Miéville 2009: 512) in the face of present circumstances involves a painful transformation. The weirdness specific to the Anthropocene is, though, expressed in the geographical and urban topography of the series, in the material ecologies of which processes of detection are always a part. It is to an examination of these ecologies that I will now turn.

A city, supposedly



Figure 1: A deceptively commanding view of ‘Vinci’, California, in 2:1.

Wretched, compromised, and on the edge, Detective Ray Velcoro arrives late at the crime scene. He has been working the case of a missing person – Vinci city manager Ben Caspere – whose pivotal role in various corrupt practices is something Velcoro’s crooked bosses wish to keep quiet. Caspere’s whereabouts is equally of interest to Frank Semyon, Vinci’s resident gangster for whom Velcoro also does enforcement work. Semyon has entrusted Caspere with seven million dollars, money gained by liquidizing the assets of his entire criminal empire and intended to be invested in a major land deal. Caspere is, though, no longer missing. His mutilated body has been found next to California’s coastal highway, and a group of detectives from various different agencies have been waiting for a representative of the Vinci Police Department. Velcoro arrives to meet fellow members of what will become a special detail: Ani Bezzerides of Ventura County Sheriff’s CID, and Paul Woodrugh of California Highway Patrol, soon to be a State Investigator. Superficially, the special

detail will bring together these detectives (and, at one stage removed, Semyon, who turns detective himself) in order to solve the case of Caspere's murder. But beneath the surface each of them has a 'confidential mandate' to either gather evidence of widespread corruption in Vinci, or to keep it hidden, to 'control the sprawl, control the flow of information' (2:1). As they meet for the first time, the detectives eye each other suspiciously.

So far, so noir. What makes this second season of *True Detective* interesting is Vinci itself (Figure 1). Vinci is a source of bewilderment, derision, or disgust from all those forced to encounter it. 'What the fuck is Vinci?' Velcoro is asked upon his arrival at the crime scene. 'A city, supposedly', he mumbles (2:1). Vinci is a tiny industrial zone located just a few miles from downtown Los Angeles. Though fictional, it is a barely disguised impression of Vernon, California, where the series was filmed. Like its real life counterpart, we are told that Vinci is a place that 'gets a day to day influx of 70,000 people' (2:2) but has fewer than 100 residents. Bezzerides is briefed that Vinci '[s]tarted out as a vice haven, early 1900s, went industrial in the 20s, pushed out residents for manufacturing zones' (2:2). Velcoro later explains that while other American cities reliant on industrial manufacturing have faced inexorable decline, in Vinci 'a bunch of good capitalists ran in for cheap leases, tax incentives' and the freedom to exploit an immigrant labour force (2:2). The city seal, proudly displayed on the entrance to the police station, depicts – in socialist realist style – factory buildings belching smoke, and a symbolic arrangement of machine cogs (Figure 2). It replaces the 'Exclusively Industrial' motto of real life Vernon with the more tragic 'Towards Tomorrow', here acting as epitaph for techno-utopian fantasies of acceleration. The catastrophic reality of attempting to harness such forces is inscribed in Vinci's hellishly toxic urban landscape (Figure 3). Against images of

chemical plants, waste transfer sites, and colossal power stations, we are told that the city produces or processes millions of pounds of toxic waste every year, making it the '[w]orst air polluter in the state' (2:2). The material infrastructure of this contaminated atmosphere mediates every aspect, every space, of the investigation, from a dive bar located amongst a complex of warehouses, to residential homes squeezed between factories. Even the base of investigations used by this special detail of detectives – decked out with the requisite crime board and stack of file storage boxes – is in an industrial unit.



Figure 2: The city seal, on display at Vinci Police Headquarters (2:1).



Figure 3: Semyon and Velcoro compare investigative notes as chemical waste flows from a drain in the background (2:2).

The city of Vinci serves a purpose different to that of its colossal and iconic neighbour Los Angeles, the latter of which is the native territory of both hardboiled detection and postmodernism (Shoop 2011: 206–07). This is not to say that the series ignores the wider cultural history of the Los Angeles region – there are nods here to Polanski’s *Chinatown* (1974) and to the writing of James Ellroy, while one episode shamelessly employs techniques straight from the David Lynch playbook. However, Vinci more specifically functions as an affective map of industrial capitalism itself – as a site of waste processing and disposal it maps a world of entangled relations in which there is no outside, no ‘away’. Of course, once waste is classified as such, it is typically expunged from everyday life. In western cultures at least, the unwelcome surplus to our lives is banished, sent to dumping sites comfortably separate to daily perception and memory, scrubbing clean these human processes by dint of various municipal services (Thill 2015: 27). Yet, as Morton points out, the processes

fundamental to industrial capitalism – the melting into air of all that is solid – do not perform a disappearing act. That which is melted does not dematerialize into an imagined ‘away’, into ‘some ontologically alien realm’ (Morton 2013: 115), it remains part of the ecology, a weird ecology that seems to threaten the human in various ways. It is in such terms that, in *True Detective*, matter is not simply the brute, inert opposite to lively human vitality. The series instead acknowledges ‘the vitality of matter and the lively powers of material formations’ (Bennett 2010: vii, original emphasis). This is not animism but, rather, a recognition that the markers of the Anthropocene are far from monumental (as in the cozily familiar examples subject to spectacular destruction in various disaster movies). These markers instead take the form of a geology and atmosphere, experienced at the extremes of different scales, which *does* something and does something to us. For Jane Bennett (2010: viii), to acknowledge the vitality of nonhuman bodies is to recognize ‘the capacity of things [...] not only to impede or block the will and design of humans, but to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own’.

One aspect of the second season’s convoluted narrative concerns machinations over parcels of land in northern California. This land – which over the course of eight episodes we glimpse only briefly – has been intentionally contaminated by toxic waste transported from Vinci in order to lower its price and, in doing so, allow a consortium of investors to profit from land ‘rezoning’ linked to a government rail project. Gangster Frank Semyon has dumped this waste as part of a plan to escape the grim mess of Vinci’s streets by buying in to a sanitizing legitimacy otherwise apparently reserved for the old moneyed classes. For Semyon, the material world has a strange and menacing intimacy, its proximity threatens his control, it is a source of anxiety and fear. From his mid-century modern home, set in hills that overlook the

city from above, he surveys a beautified world. City lights, twinkling in the distance, aestheticize the human conquest of 'nature', even though such aesthetics are actually an anaesthetic, which is to say, with Nicholas Mirzoeff (2014: 220), that they lead to 'a loss of perception (*aesthesis*)', they sedate and numb humanity to the catastrophic repercussions of such actions. In fact, Semyon's plans are as contaminated as the land. 'Everyone gets touched', his wife warns. The 'distance' he wishes to put between himself and Vinci is revealed as 'a psychic and ideological construct' intended to protect against 'the nearness of things' (Morton 2013: 27). Entangled in Earthly reality, there is nowhere to escape to, nowhere 'beyond us' as Semyon puts it (2:1). Like the materiality of waste that is not 'away' in sites we specially designate for such purposes but instead continues to generate lively toxic discharges and noxious gases that permeate the atmosphere, everything that Semyon seeks to dispose of continues to circulate. He finds himself 'glued', caught in a 'sticky mesh of viscosity' (Morton 2013: 36, 30). Soon, the pristine (an)aesthetics of his home are infected with ominous and inexplicable stains, dark patches that appear on the ceiling. His home, *oikos*, his place in the world, is rendered weird. Eventually, his plan in ruins, Semyon is forced to abandon this home entirely, to confront the immediacy of the world and turn detective.

The disappearance of distance, of the outside, has a particular cultural history localized in the California of the 1960s and 1970s. For Anselm Franke (2013: 12), the emergence of a counterculture during this period can be understood in terms of a 'planetary paradigm' in social and political thinking, specifically inspired by the publication of the first photographs to depict the 'whole Earth' from space. Though exploration of such virgin territory is invariably a pretext for colonization, the apparently universalist power of NASA's 'Earthrise' and 'Blue Marble' photographs

stimulated an unexpected shift from expansionist thinking towards a new concern for the ‘immanent planetary interior’ (Franke 2013: 13). Credited as inspiration for the environmental movement, these images, and others that followed, depicted a home planet in the blackness of space, a fragile and paradoxical ecosystem which offers ‘boundless containment’ (Franke 2013: 14), and requires its human custodians to unite around the task of maintaining its supposedly natural equilibrium. It is, of course, well documented that the emergence of hippie environmentalism was inseparable from a certain kind of technological determinism that championed cybernetics and systems thinking. In what has come to be called the ‘California ideology’, the closed circle of the Earth ‘displaces the line of the horizon’ and with it a separate outside (Franke 2013: 13).

Detective Bezzerides’s role in the investigation takes her north, along coastal scenery, to a hippie commune, but any contrast to the industrial filth of Vinci merely emphasizes its connectedness – everything is touched, contaminated, there is no ‘nature’. Indeed, in *True Detective*, humans do not have a custodial relation with the world. It is no coincidence that what the State Attorney describes as ‘a window into everything’ (2:2) is opened up by the death of Caspere – the death of a city *manager*, a weird event that gives lie to the human conviction in rational or intentional control of this apparently inert metropolitan space. The supposed city is in fact ‘an agentic assemblage’ (Bennett 2010: 21), a space of distributive agency in which every body – human and nonhuman – is always affecting and being affected, is always an expression of the world’s entanglements. In Bennett’s terms, Vinci (and thus the case itself), is a precarious assemblage of smokestacks, land prices, electrical current, chemical runoff, magnetic fields, extortion practices, hydrocarbons, meat packing,

regulatory systems, prostitution, gas turbines, tax revenues and plastics, all of which are held together in spite of – indeed because of – its unevenness and friction.

Bennett (2010: 36) makes it clear that the agency of such assemblages ‘is not the strong, autonomous kind of agency’ usually ascribed to humans, which is not to strip humans of agency altogether, nor to suggest that nonhuman phenomena and things are discretely agentic. Rather, in her account, agency and intentionality are always emergent properties of certain configurations with “‘foreign” materialities’ (Bennett 2010: 36). Thinking agency in such terms does not simply undermine the idea that cities are human spaces within which ‘we’ remain in charge – instead it means confronting the emergent nature of the human itself. Barad (2007: 178) goes further than Bennett in emphasizing that agency is not something owned or possessed, that it is not an attribute, but is a continual process, ‘an enactment’, a ‘doing’ that is also a ‘becoming’. This means that it does not occur on the basis of system-like *inter-*actions between supposedly stable categories of human and nonhuman, precisely because such entities ‘do not preexist their intra-action’ (Barad 2007: 175). *Intra-*action instead emphasizes Barad’s contention that human and nonhuman bodies are differential materializations of the world itself, ‘particular patterns *of* the world’ (Barad 2007: 176, original emphasis). This contemporary theory of agency, derived from quantum physics, confronts a thoroughly alien notion of causality, wherein conventional notions of intentionality and culpability no longer apply. Before I consider, in more detail, how processes of detection might be conceived in such terms, it is important to reiterate how *True Detective* expresses this entanglement in a kind of terminal aesthetic, a condition of disorienting trauma where any humanist redemption is foreclosed.



Figure 4: David Maisel’s aerial photography, artfully reworked in the title sequence for Season 2.

For Bennett (2001), an encounter with the liveliness of the world produces a sense of ‘enchantment’, an upgraded mode of aesthetic experience that can be cultivated and refined. But whereas she downplays the fundamental weirdness of this encounter, Season 2 of *True Detective* maps its destabilizing effects and affects in a variety of ways. Velcoro, for example, reveals that although he once tried smoking an e-cigarette, ‘it felt like it was smoking me’ (2:2) – no longer at a proper distance from us, nonhuman objects unnerve and unsettle. In fact, the series addresses this new intimacy from the very beginning, from a title sequence that takes the form of stylized double exposures in which portraits of the main characters act as windows onto California’s vibrant, poisoned earth. The sequence draws on the aerial photography of David Maisel (Figure 4), whose work focuses on the geological consequences of human culture, and in this case the visible results of draining areas of land to provide water for Los Angeles. His influence is, though, not limited to the title sequence – the

salt flat location of Semyon's eventual death is in a region of California examined by Maisel, for example. Moreover, his real influence is felt in the overall significance of aerial sequences throughout the series. There are many such sequences, used partly as transitions between the multiplicity of narrative strands, partly to situate the various spaces of investigation, but primarily to evoke a strange kind of free fall, one that does not conform to conventional subject-object relations. In the urban assemblage of Vinci and its environs, we drift disturbingly over gigantic power stations, swirl around the city's iconic water tower, loom over treatment works and factory complexes (Figure 5). These are aerial views in which navigation seems to have failed. We follow the trajectory of coastal roads and multilane freeways that cut through mountains (Figure 6), but the progress promised by such movement – the destination, the resolution – never arrives.



Figure 5: Industrial drift in Vinci's urban assemblage (2:1).



Figure 6: Illusions of progress on the highways of California (2:1).

The art critic and pilot Joseph Thompson (2013: 159) suggests that Maisel's work methodically rejects every convention of landscape and aerial photography usually employed to 'establish depth, distance, and spatial orientation'. His images are instead composed by achieving what pilots call an 'unusual attitude', that is, by violently forcing the aircraft to bank or spiral into a position of 'horizonless discombobulation' (Thompson 2013: 159). In the absence of a stabilizing horizon, pilots have even reported 'a feeling of confusion between the self and the aircraft' (Steyerl 2012: 13). The usual balance upon which an opposition between human and nonhuman rests is thrown off-kilter, provoking an affective encounter with what Barad (2007: 169) calls the 'mutual constitution' of humans and nonhumans, a feeling of ecological configuration and continual reconfiguration. The cinematography in *True Detective* makes some concessions to the horizon line – its aerial attitude is not as unusual as Maisel's. Nonetheless, many of the aerial sequences depicting Vinci and greater Los Angeles respond to his refusal to compose images of urban space as sites

of human agency. Instead, they careen, alarmingly, over a world that ‘exceeds – and escapes – our efforts to grasp it and define it’ (Shaviro 2014: 128). Deprived of coordinates that allow the nonhuman to be safely oriented in relation *to us*, there is something alien to this territory. As the soused, sleazy mayor of Vinci observes, ‘the world will turn, uncaring of our struggles’ (2:2). Extreme proximity to a vibrant and roiling world of excessive agency strips humanity of its apparently unique aliveness. So it is that detective Woodrugh, former soldier and mercenary, is not the only character to display symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder – each of the detectives suffer a disconcerting condition in which, as Hito Steyerl (2012: 26) describes, ‘we no longer know whether we are objects or subject as we spiral down in an imperceptible free fall’. If this is, then, a world of vital materialism, this vitality does not result in a more enchanted world but in a world utterly indifferent to our fate, a world that is newly terrifying.

A giant gutter in outer space



Figure 7: Investigating the deep time of the petrochemical present, in 1:3.

If Vinci is doom-laden, a city marked by forces that will eventually destroy the world, then the territory explored in the first season of *True Detective* maps the consequences of a catastrophe that has already occurred.⁹ On one level, this takes the form of a simple narrative conceit whereby circumstances produced by natural disaster demand a series of personal recollections. The narrative of Season 1 unfolds according to a succession of flashbacks, which, we are told, promise to piece together the details of a homicide investigation after the original case files were lost in the wake of Hurricane Rita.¹⁰ In 1995, Dora Lange, a Louisiana prostitute, was murdered as part of an occult ritual, and her death appears to have been connected to a series of other, allegedly closed, cases. In the present day of 2012, former Louisiana State Police detectives Rustin Cohle and Martin Hart are interviewed about their investigation. Yet these recollections, and the subsequent revival of their investigation, are expressions of a broader philosophical catastrophe, one in which the erasure of distance, and the elimination of the horizon, have already brought about the end of the world.

This is the end of the world as anaesthetic effect, the end of a phenomenological ‘world’ that exists for human subjects and reveals itself to us entirely (Thacker 2011: 6). What, then, do we encounter in the Anthropocene, after the end of the subjective world? Perhaps, as suggested in Eugene Thacker’s search for alternate terminology, the elimination of the anthropocentric ‘world’ reveals an objective ‘Earth’, a geological object that opens itself to the collection of evidence: samples, data, etc. (Thacker 2011: 7). And yet, Thacker goes on to emphasize, there are things in the ‘fissures, lapses, or lacunae’ between the concepts of ‘world’ and ‘Earth’ that cannot be evidenced (Thacker 2011: 8). Contemporary life is increasingly marked by encounters with something enigmatic, something that ‘persists in the shadows’, that

remains occulted (Thacker 2011: 6). In short: ‘Anything that reveals itself does not reveal itself in total’ (Thacker 2011: 7). For Thacker, this conceptual remainder is the ‘Planet’, a *negative* concept in that it is ‘simply that which remains “after” the human’ (2011: 7). To encounter the Planet is to confront a threshold at which human powers of detection negate themselves, to experience a weird moment in which powers of detection uncover their own limits, and, in doing so, expose a paradoxical horizon of investigative thought. It is in the weird temporality of the Anthropocene that we are forced to encounter this paradoxical Planet.

Beyond the fact that Hart and Cohle’s investigation is buried in the past, the first season of *True Detective* is very much concerned with a deep, inhuman time. Expressions of deep time are etched into the Louisiana landscape in which the investigation takes place. This swampy region, stretching along the Mississippi river and crisscrossed with pipelines, is home to more than 100 petrochemical plants, a landscape largely defined by a capitalist economy fuelled by petroleum and synthetic chemicals derived from petroleum (Misrach and Orff 2014: 17). Indeed, Louisiana’s unique geography offers the ideal resources for such industry, the infrastructure for which again lies menacingly in the background of many sequences (Figure 7), and plays a central role in the titles (Figure 8). It is also reflected in the emphasis on circuitous car journeys along dusty roads that follow the wend of the river (Figure 9), journeys which trace the visible and relatively immediate effect of the petrochemical industry: cutting channels into the Mississippi’s deltaic wetlands for oil and gas pipelines has produced erosion causing coastal land to sink to the ocean floor (Misrach and Orff 2014: 177). As Cohle observes, en route to another tiny isolated community, ‘This pipeline is carving up the coast like a jigsaw. Place is gonna be underwater in thirty years’ (1:3). More significantly, though, the setting also serves to

express the ominous and less apparent threat of a deep planetary time indifferent to human existence, a time that stretches billions of years into an unthinkable past. After all, petrochemical plants refine geological deposits from the Pleistocene, human technoculture exploits prehistoric fossilized matter extracted from the deep time of the planet, from a time prior to the human. So it is that the car which conveys Hart and Cohle's investigation across this land is fuelled – quite literally – by '[l]iquefied dinosaur bones' (Morton 2013: 58). Here, natural or geopolitical resources become chthonic entities, manifestations of an occulted Planet that does not threaten the human antagonistically but in its utter neutrality to human life.



Figure 8: Material entanglement in the title sequence for Season 1: Detective Cohle, a refinery, and an outline of coastal Louisiana.



Figure 9: The liminal landscape of Louisiana (1:3).

Quite beyond its flashback structure, Hart and Cohle's investigation has a swampy, organic configuration (Figure 10); it is submerged in a time of 'swarming [...] primeval oceans' and 'clustered ponds of ooze' (Woodard 2012: 1). This is a time that is neither exterior substance nor pre-existing background against which the dynamics of life can be measured; rather it, too, is intra-actively produced in the Earth's ongoing materialization (Barad 2007: 179–80). A causal past is entangled with the emergent present, immanent to *everyone* and *everything*. This, for Cohle, is 'the terrible and secret fate of all life'. What happens continues to happen: 'Everything we've ever done or will do, we're gonna do over, and over, and over again' (1:5). Although it is impossible to gain any perspective on this entanglement, the investigation is forced to confront the human's immanent un-humanness, wherein any distinction between nature and culture is as liminal as the land. Social relations are ecological relations – human institutions, whether religious, juridical or familial, are natural and infinitesimal features of planetary vitality. The Yellow King, the

investigation's enigmatic suspect, is a complex ecology of powers that stretches before and beyond the lives of the detectives.¹¹ As Cohle informs those interviewing him, there is no such thing as closure, as a case that can be solved, 'nothing is ever over' (1:3).¹²



Figure 10: The course of enquiries leads back to the swamp (1:7).

This encounter with the horizon of investigative thought is rendered in the form of detective Cohle's philosophical pessimism, which marks a retreat from the futile horror of human existence. For Cohle, the human world, and human consciousness in particular, is ghettoized, '[a] giant gutter in outer space' produced by a false privileging of the human capacity for intellectual reason, and a separation from relations ecological and cosmic. Here, the series returns to and reworks the earliest origins of the genre. In *True Detective*, the 'locked room' – the intellectual conundrum featured in Edgar Allan Poe's 1841 short story 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' – becomes the prison of human consciousness. Locked inside the illusion of

identity, the ‘dream about being a person’, as Cohle puts it, we live according to the certainty that we are ‘more than a biological puppet’ (1:3), when in fact, he insists, humans are nothing more than ‘sentient meat’ (1:8). Human life is fundamentally meaningless: human consciousness is a mistake, a lie, a con. There is no possibility of solving the mystery of an existence that is accidental and arbitrary.

Cohle’s investigative activities extend from this position. For him, conventional practices of detection are by-products of a particular mode of thought, namely a crass rationalism that, for the most part, dismisses the non-conscious realm entirely.

Cohle’s frustration is not simply a device used to update the world-weariness typical to the genre, instead it nods towards recent research in fields like neurobiology (Ennis 2014: 97), and acknowledges that there are numerous and diverse modes of thinking beyond the forms of rationality with which we are most familiar. As Shaviro (2014: 127) argues, it is important to ensure that our ‘image of thought’ extends beyond the rationalistic, not least because humans themselves operate on the basis of a multiplicity of cognitive, perceptual and sensorial processes, only some of which are rational. In other words, ‘we do not always think in the “human” ways we commonly suppose that we do’ (Shaviro 2014: 127). If what we discretely classify as the human body is, in fact, always already occupied by a multiplicity of non-human micro-organisms, why should human thought be any different? (Thacker 2011: 7)

Accordingly, Shaviro outlines an entangled mode of thought, a mode attuned to relations and to emergent processes of becoming, rather than correlated to being. Drawing on the work of Erin Manning, he describes this mode of thought as ‘autistic’ (Shaviro 2014: 132), a quality we can identify as being central to ecological detection. Manning (2013: 8) describes autistic experience in terms of ‘intensive relationality’, an ‘affective attunement’ that is not demoted to the background. In contrast to

undiagnosed ‘neurotypicals’ who dissect entangled relations into subjects and objects, autistics do not ‘abstract themselves – their “self” – from the emergent environment’ (Manning 2013: 10). Instead, Manning insists, ‘the autistic dwells in an ecology of practices that creates resonances across scales and registers of life, both organic and inorganic, not solely in the so-called human realm’ (Manning 2013: 150). This intensity of relation ‘is an ecological attunement to the multiplicity that is life-living, for it attends, always, to the dynamic details of a process’ (Manning 2013: 219). Here Manning does not simply attempt to overturn common prejudice by highlighting neurodiversity, but, more radically, she demands that neurotypical humans renounce their comfortably unpathologized realm on the autistic ‘spectrum’ – any such barriers must be crossed in order to harness more-than-human potential.

It is in similar terms that Thomas Elsaesser (2009: 31) identifies a tendency in contemporary drama to feature ‘productive pathologies’. Indeed, although rarely diagnosed with any specificity, and sometimes reduced to a set of problematic behavioural eccentricities, the autistic detective is something of a twenty-first century trope. These detectives present a more radical challenge to certain humanist assumptions that, I have claimed, continue to undergird many science-fictional investigations. Examples, to name but a few, include: Gregory House as detective-diagnostician emotionally indifferent to the plight of victim-patients (*House* [2004–12]); Adrian Monk whose investigative powers are mediated by an obsessive compulsive disorder (*Monk* [2002–09]); a reimagined contemporary Sherlock Holmes as obsessive sociopath (*Sherlock* [2010–present]); the brusque precision of detectives Saga Norén (*Bron/Broen* [2011–present]) and Elise Wasserman (*The Tunnel* [2013–present]); the bipolar mania and nonlinear thinking of CIA officer Carrie Mathison (*Homeland* [2011–present]); the antisocial powers of imagination which allow

criminal profiler Will Graham to become attuned to psychopathic killers (*Hannibal* [2013–15]). Traditionally, these characteristics have been identified with threats to social stability and security, that is, with the dangerous and crazy adversaries of rational heroes who, by contrast, gained the upper hand by repressing any emotional disorders or schisms of their own. Yet, in the twenty-first century, as Elsaesser contends,

[b]eing able to discover new connections, where ordinary people operate only by analogy or antithesis; being able to rely on bodily ‘intuition’ as much as on ocular perception; or being able to think ‘laterally’ and respond hypersensitively to changes in the environment may turn out to be assets and not just an affliction. (Elsaesser 2009: 26)

In a word, this non-reflexive, sometimes non-conscious mode of detection is *aesthetic*.

So although nothing reveals itself completely – the human’s ‘positive knowledge’ about its various entanglements remain ‘necessarily finite and limited’ – there is also a limit to which we are really independent from such entanglements (Shaviro 2014: 136, 135). Indeed, the very unknowability of these relations intensifies and exacerbates this entanglement, meaning that, for Shaviro (2014: 137), such relations must be considered in aesthetic terms. The aesthetics of ecological detection are manifested in an ‘immanent noncognitive contact’, ‘an occult process of influence’ that occurs beneath or beyond conscious perception, ‘[o]utside of any correlation of “subject” and “object”, or “knower” and “known”’ (Shaviro 2014: 148). If we extend Elsaesser’s argument to address the specific context of the

Anthropocene, it would seem that the circumstances of the present simultaneously induce such aesthetic experience and demand its efficacious exploitation. The human's immanent unhumanness is not only exposed by ecological trauma but presents itself as the means to survive the end of the world. In *True Detective*, Cohle's geo-material sensibility is the locus of this encounter.



Figure 11: The body of Dora Lange, arranged at the roots of a tree (1:1).



Figure 12: Rustin Cohle and the aesthetics of ecological detection (1:3).

The catalyst for the investigation is the discovery of Lange's ritually disfigured body (Figure 11), arranged at the roots of an ancient tree standing alone in overgrown cane fields. This is a crime rooted to the land. When Cohle is finally able to confirm to his partner that they have located the lair of the killer, it is because he recognizes something about the material properties of the atmosphere and how it connects to other scenes of the crime: 'That taste – aluminum, ash – I've tasted it before' (1:8). By this stage we have already learned that Cohle is able to 'smell the psychosphere' (1:1), to attune himself to the weird aesthetic entanglement of human culture and planetary matter. We have seen him infuriate Hart with his sensitivity to the transitory rather than monumental nature of the built environment, his sense that the urban spaces of human culture are already akin to fading memories, lost in deep time, 'like there was never anything here but jungle' (1:1). We have also learned that Cohle gathers clues from fantastical visions, such as a pattern detected in a murmuration of birds which emulates a symbol used by the killer (Figure 12), a pattern which leads

him to discover more conventional evidence on the ground below. All of which indicates that although it stimulates and provokes thought, ecological detection occurs in an encounter with planetary forces that cannot be *contained* by thought (Shaviro 2014: 154). While a more conventional drama might emphasize the damaging effects of Cohle's experience as an undercover narcotics agent in order to rationalize and explain away these practices, *True Detective* refuses to construct a dichotomous relation between the natural and supernatural, between the rational and aesthetic (Ennis 2014: 101). In fact, ecological detection is nothing new – far from it, the aesthetic relations from which it derives are fundamentally 'primordial' (Shaviro 2014: 156), the basis for all activity and experience.

Nonetheless, the 'truth' with which Cohle becomes entangled is clearly not a truth that Sherlock Holmes would recognize. If ecological detection can be characterized, first, as an entangled aesthetic practice of knowing and being, and, second, as an attunement to the geo-material circumstances of such entanglement, then it is not a mode of detection that will lead to knowledge in the humanist sense that knowledge is conventionally defined within the genre. Nothing is tied up, no perspective is achieved, and so, as Cohle admits, nothing is solved. Even the ostensibly productive capacities of its aesthetics remain inseparable from a kind of paralysis, if not of terror then of pessimism. After all, this mode of detection emerges from encounters with an unsettling and ultimately *weird* ecology, from exposure to a darkly entangled reality in which human-nonhuman relations provoke more than mere connection. In Cohle's investigative practice, 'mainlining the secret truth of the universe' (1:2) is a form of possession, wherein human thought, feeling and action is rendered unfamiliar. Ecological detection is, then, an aesthetic response to relational encounters that disclose less than they disorder, confirm less than they confound. It

paradoxically reveals the manifestation of a Planet that is simply incompatible with the anthropocentric world, meaning that ecological detection does not make connections and relations accessible that would otherwise remain obscured, but instead serves to ‘make accessible the inaccessible – in its inaccessibility’ (Thacker 2014: 96). As a mode of detection immanent to the paradoxes of the Anthropocene, as a negative mode of detection, it is surely the only mode appropriate to this era of crisis. The truth in *True Detective* expresses a threshold, a limit point – it is a truth that can only be reported after the human, after the end of the world.

Finally, and by way of a conclusion, it is also at this threshold that it becomes possible to speculate on broader implications for the field of television studies itself, beyond the crime and detective genres, indeed beyond the representational restrictions of genre entirely. Here, we might suppose that humanity’s cultural confrontation with the limits of its own powers of detection is, in effect, genreless. We might consider how the crisis of the human is expressed in certain tendencies and diverse examples of contemporary television drama. Perhaps it is possible to map practices of detection, and their attendant malfunctions, in unexpected dramatic domains that bear little resemblance to generic expectations and discourses. Yet any attempt to map an emergent sensibility in twenty-first century television must begin by displacing the privileged role of interpretive analysis, which, in turn, upholds a hermeneutic concern with meaning. To grasp the real implications of a geo-material or ecological turn in critical theory, we must investigate phenomena beyond that which is simply represented on the screen, attuning ourselves instead to the affective flows and rhythms actively performed by contemporary television culture. In the condition of metaphysical trauma that is the Anthropocene, tele-vision no longer presents an apparently distant world but expresses, in increasingly intensive fashion, a state of

Planetary entanglement. In such circumstances, the aesthetics of television viewing are transformed. Thrust into new ecological practices, we are all detectives now.

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Television Programmes

- Bron (Broen) (The Bridge)* (2011–present, Sweden/Denmark: DR/SVT).
- Hannibal* (2013–15, US: NBC).
- Homeland* (2011–present, US: Showtime).

House (2004–12, US: Fox)

Monk (2002–09, US: USA Network).

Sherlock (2010–present, UK/US: BBC/PBS).

True Detective (2014–present, US: HBO).

The Tunnel (2013–present, UK/France: Sky Atlantic/Canal+).

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Notes

¹ Industry rumours suggest that Nic Pizzolatto may yet write a third season for HBO.

² All quotations from *True Detective* follow this format – Season: Episode.

³ Morton (2013: 58–59) notes that ‘75 percent of global warming effects will persist until five hundred years from now’, while ‘[t]he half-life of plutonium-239 is 24,100 years’, a period as long as the whole of human history.

⁴ The magazine *True Detective* was originally published in 1924, under the title *True Detective Mysteries*, and eventually ceased publication in 1995 (see Marr 2015).

⁵ For example, Michael Hauskeller and his co-editors (2015: 4) chart a ‘trajectory [...] in SF’s representation of posthumanist concepts through film and television over the last century’. They describe a shift in the role played by characters that challenge what is recognizably human, a shift from the status of monsters and villains to the status of heroes and saviours.

⁶ Initially, the steam engine enabled coal to be extracted from the Earth more efficiently. Steam powered drills soon provided the means to access deeper levels of oil-bearing rock (Mitchell 2013: 32).

⁷ Shaviro argues that Jameson’s description of the ‘waning of affect in postmodern culture’ (Jameson 1991: 10) in fact concerns an excessive stimulation that eradicates the divisions between experiencing subjects and knowable objects. The world is unknowable and unrepresentable precisely because the flows of affect ‘always escape subjective representation’ (Shaviro 2010: 5).

⁸ See, for example, a scene in 1:1 in which Cohle muses on the inability of the human race to ‘deny its programming’, to welcome its own extinction.

⁹ Hence the ordering of my analysis, which addresses the two anthologies of *True Detective* according to the way in which geo-material temporality is differently emphasized in Seasons 2 and 1, rather than according to the production history of the series.

¹⁰ Hurricane Rita struck Louisiana in September 2005. Much of the initial investigation in Season 1 involves tracking down information on churches and schools shut down after the earlier devastation of Hurricane Andrew (August 1992).

¹¹ In 1:8, Errol Childress's sister locates this power 'all around us – before you were born, and after you die'.

¹² In spite of this assertion, Cohle cannot deny his humanist programming and, at the end of the series, remains haunted by the fact that their investigation failed to expose the totality of conspiratorial connections.